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SUBJECT The Tatar Race of Sinkiang

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1. Number in Sinkiang: The Tatar race of Sinkiang is also referred to, both in Sinkiang and in English-language texts on that province, as Tartar, T'a-t'a-erh and Noghai. According to a 1941 survey they numbered 4,601 or slightly more than .12% of the total population of Sinkiang. 50X1
2. Origin of the Name: The Tatars inherited their name from the name of the Mongol clan to which they at one time belonged. They belonged to the T'a-t'a clan of the Mongols who absorbed some Moslem culture and turned to Islam. For this, they were greatly despised by the Mongol Lamas and given another name, Noghai, which means "dogs".
3. History of the Race: This fine people, of whom there are at least two millions in the USSR, are the legacy of Jenghis Khan to the west. They were left behind when his great empire shrank away to the east and though the centuries have changed them a great deal they still bear evidence of their Mongol origins. Left in a strange land they did not perish but built their own cities and developed into a great people. Most Tatars come from the Volga region which today comprises the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. They are the descendents of the inhabitants of the Kazan Khanate which was formed in 1438 on the territory of the former Volga Bulgarian Empire as a result of the collapse of the Golden Horde. In 1552 Kazan was conquered by the Moscow State and from that time on the Tatars have been under Russian rule. In 1920 they received autonomous status and formed the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, in which they comprise the majority of the population. Considerable numbers of them live also in the Bashkir ASSR and in the Molotov, Gorki, and Saratov districts of the RSFSR, as well as in Sinkiang. Those who dwell in Sinkiang are either descendents of Tatar traders who settled in Sinkiang in the days of the Tsar, or anti-Soviet refugees who entered the province after 1917.

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4. Language: Tatar is a Turkic language and belongs to the northwestern group of this language family. Despite their small number they exercise considerable influence in Sinkiang as the group with the highest average of education among the Turkic speaking peoples. The complicated Arabic script which had been such a bar to the elimination of illiteracy was abandoned in favor of a Latinized script which, in the late thirties, was in turn replaced by a Cyrillic script.
5. Religion: The Tatars are Sunni Mohammedans. They were converted to Islam in the tenth century. After the Russian conquest of the Volga region, attempts were made by Russian colonizers to convert them to Christianity by offering economic advantages to converts, but success was negligible. Mohammedanism never had a very strong hold upon them and it is reported that large numbers of them in the Soviet Union are abandoning Islam, becoming increasingly European in their outlook and ways. Those in Sinkiang still appear to be strongly Islamic. Their standards of living are much higher than those of the Uighurs and Kazakhs and yet they are of frugal habit, still refusing to partake of either pork or wine.
6. Physical Characteristics: The Tatars are a strange and splendid people, their history a long romantic struggle, their manner princely, their nature impulsive both in friendship and in anger, their bodies skillful in wild dancing, their hearts full of song. The mixture of Mongol with white blood has produced women of extraordinary beauty. The mixtures of European and Mongol blood (for the Tatars took European wives at the time when the conquests of Jenghis Khan had reached the Caucasus) has produced a strikingly handsome race with whitish skins, high noses, and deep-set eyes. Their hair is dark and their dark eyes are particularly lustrous and beautiful. It is noticeable, however, that as they are brought increasingly into contact with civilizing influences they tend to become Europeanized, losing something of their charm. Tatars and the Uzbeks are the most exclusive people in Sinkiang, rarely marrying members of any other race.
7. Concentrations: The Tatars in Sinkiang are concentrated in the two cities of Kuldja (Ining) and Chuguchak (Tahcheng).
8. Occupations: Before the Bolshevik revolution the main economy of the Tatars was based on agriculture, but many individual Tatars were active traders, especially as middlemen for Russian firms in Turkic speaking areas such as Sinkiang. In the Sinkiang cities where they have settled, the Tatars are a prominent element in commerce, many have entered Government service and others engage in animal husbandry. They are a clever, industrious people who have high social rating, many having become extremely rich. They are also gifted with considerable artistic sense. This finds expression in their music, which has a haunting loveliness never to be forgotten once it is heard. Their music typifies their character, for in it the idioms of East and West are harmoniously mingled.

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